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SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: NEW DELHI CONFERENCE DISCUSSES THREAT,
PLEDGES \$401 MILLION FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

REF: (A) State 159330; (B) New Delhi 5231

Summary

¶1. The Government of India (GOI) hosted a successful international conference on avian and pandemic influenza, in collaboration with the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI), on December 4-6. Several themes emerged: that the international community cannot let down its guard against the threat from avian and pandemic influenza (API); that we need to move toward a "one health" approach to dealing with animal and human health threats; and that many countries are shifting emphasis from emergency response to building long-term capacity for API and other emerging threats. The USG, with a pledge of \$195 million, led donors in new pledges of international assistance to combat the spread of avian influenza and to prepare for a possible pandemic totaling \$401 million. The GOI presented, as a template for other nations to use, a road map for 2008 action on API whose recommendations include the importance of effective public communication about API, improving biosecurity in poultry farms, and coordination between animal and public health sectors.

¶2. Indonesian Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari contended that the question of sharing virus samples was more important than issues the conference considered, but discussion of this topic was minimal (as planned). Egypt announced that it will host the next international API conference in October 2008.

¶3. GOI Prime Minister Singh, the leaders of several international organizations, and numerous government ministers addressed the conference. USDel was led by senior officials from State, USDA, HHS, USAID and DOD.
End Summary.

Fifth in a Series of International Conferences

¶4. The New Delhi International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, the fifth major international API meeting since October 2005, was held December 4-6 in partnership with IPAPI. It was the largest such gathering to date, attracting nearly 750 delegates -- 40 of them ministers -- representing 111 nations and 29 international and regional organizations. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Margaret Chan, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director General Jacques Diouf, World Organization for Animal Health (known

by French initials OIE) Director General Bernard Vallat, UN System Influenza Coordinator (UNSIC) David Nabarro, and World Bank Director of Operations Services Peter Harrold addressed the conference.

Pandemic Threat Demands Continued Vigilance

15. Singh warned the conference against the danger of institutional fatigue in the battle against API and urged a "one health" approach to the threat that closely integrates animal and human health efforts. Chan stressed the international community dare not let down its guard against API since, though its timing and nature are unknown, another pandemic is inevitable. She said that, unlike in past centuries, improved science now provides early warning of the composition and mutations of viruses like the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus that could cause a pandemic. She added that, since a pandemic at its peak could affect an estimated 35% of the work force, it was vital to involve all parts of society in pandemic preparations, including the finance and business sectors. Nabarro noted that efforts to combat API needed to continue because, while international efforts had succeeding in reducing AI in the world, the virus had now spread to some 60 nations and had become enzootic (entrenched) in several. Diouf said that because diseases transmittable to humans often originate in developing nations, investments to improve health systems should focus on them and be viewed as an international public good. Nabarro, Vallat and Harrold stressed the need for continued financial support for global efforts to combat the spread of avian influenza and to prepare for a possible human pandemic. USDel also met separately with Diouf (Ref B).

Indonesia Raises Sample Sharing Issue

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16. Indonesian Health Minister Supari reiterated comments she made at the WHO Intergovernmental Meeting in Geneva November 20-23, and previously. She asserted that the question of virus sharing was more important than the issues considered at the New Delhi conference and that developing countries, instead of depending on the good will or charity of developed nations with vaccine manufacturing capacity for pharmaceuticals, should have the right to the benefits derived from viral samples from their countries. (NOTE: The controversies involving sample sharing and benefit sharing are being dealt with under WHO auspices and, by design, were not on the New Delhi agenda. END NOTE.) She also said that nations had no idea what happened to viruses sent to WHO Collaborating Centers and did not know if they were shared with vaccine manufacturers or "are utilized for the development of biological weapons." Though several nations referred to this issue, it was not a major topic of discussion. Special Representative Lange praised the concrete results of the WHO Intergovernmental Meeting and called on all nations to share virus samples freely without encumbrances. Egypt, during its presentation, and Japan, in its statement at the pledging session, also strongly supported the need to share virus samples freely and without conditions. Norway described the need for transparency, traceability and trust in the Global Influenza Surveillance Network while all countries fully share samples.

Pledging Session Raises Over \$400 Million

17. Though the New Delhi meeting was not a pledging conference as such, it included a pledging session in which eight nations and the European Commission announced \$401 million in additional pledges of international assistance above the levels at the last such pledging session in Bamako in December 2006. The USG, as usual, led the list of bilateral contributors. The list follows based on World Bank data:

United States		195.00
European Commission	111.46	
Japan	69.10	
United Kingdom	10.21	
France	7.25	
Germany		4.27

India	2.00	
Norway		1.75
Greece	0.43	
Total	401.47	

UNSCIC's Nabarro noted that the total amount raised, though considerably less than the total new contributions pledged in Bamako, was encouraging, particularly since the purpose of the meeting was not primarily to solicit pledges.

Next Steps

18. At the conference, Egypt offered to host the next international API conference, in collaboration with IPAPI, in October in Cairo in 2008 (most likely in the latter half of October). Egypt hopes to include an emphasis on such capacity-building activities as regional laboratory networks for Africa and beyond. The Egyptian offer was well-received and accepted by the delegates. At the close of the meeting, India presented its "Vision and Road Map" for use by countries, particularly those that have not been fully engaged in containing avian influenza and preparing for a pandemic, as a template with milestones to be achieved by the end of 2008. The Road Map was developed with considerable input from delegates at the conference, including USDel, but was presented as the vision of the host country. It stresses the need for effective surveillance for avian influenza in animals and humans, for planning for quick response to contain and eradicate the virus in poultry, for effective biosecurity measures on farms and for preparing pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions for human cases of avian or pandemic influenza.

IPAPI Core Group Meeting

19. After the conference concluded, Special Representative on API John Lange chaired a meeting involving representatives of the IPAPI Core Group (Australia, Canada, Japan, UK, U.S., European

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Union/Commission), international organizations, and the Government of Egypt. The World Bank and UNSCIC in the coming months plan to work with other international organizations and governments to develop options for a strategic framework that was described as the natural evolution of the effort that solidifies progress made to date and moves forward with the next phase of our collective work. The World Bank may host an experts meeting on the subject in the spring. (COMMENT: The evolution of API efforts will require close coordination within the USG, conceivably including offices that deal with other emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. END COMMENT.)

Media Coverage

110. Media coverage of the conference was sparse and there was clear frustration among the journalists. They had not received a press release or media advisory, they were not given a conference packet or even a program schedule, they did not have the names of the speakers, let alone biographies, and they received no background materials to help them understand the issues. One reporter of the largest English language TV network stated that the Minister of Health had called her personally and asked her to cover the conference. It also came to our attention that some reporters who wanted to attend the conference, were not allowed in because they did not have the Press Information Bureau identification, a credential only given to media elite. Thus, the reporter that attended the State Department's two-day workshop on avian influenza before the conference was not allowed to cover the conference itself. Instead, a more senior member of her newspaper attended who was clearly not versed in the issue. The inadequate handling of media coverage is a disconcerting sign of how ill equipped the Indian government is with regard to health communications.

111. The U.S. delegation was the only delegation that circulated any sort of press materials at the conference. FAO and the Prime

Minister's office distributed copies of the speeches of the FAO Director and the Prime Minister respectively. U.S. Embassy New Delhi distributed press packets with background materials, biographies of its delegation members and also distributed a copy of Ambassador Lange's remarks. This was in addition to a press release issued on the last day regarding the U.S. pledge. The release was picked up by the international wires AFP and Reuters and the Indian wires DPA, UNI, PTI and IANS. The reports of the U.S. donation also appeared in leading newspapers "The Times of India" (est. circulation 2 million), "Indian Express" (est. circulation 300,000), "The Economic Times" (est. circulation 450,000) and "The Financial Express" (est. circulation 300,000) and television channels "NDTV" and "Headlines Today". The media coverage reflected the US commitment toward controlling Avian Flu.

¶12. USDel has cleared this cable.

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